



April 3, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
304 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
437 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,  
Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies  
338 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,  
Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies  
313 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Shelby and Hoeven and Ranking Members Leahy and Merkley:

The Business Council for Sustainable Energy (BCSE) is writing to request funding for rural energy programs funded through the Fiscal Year 2021 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill. A chart containing industry funding requests can be found [here](#).

BCSE is a coalition of companies and trade associations from the energy efficiency, natural gas and renewable energy sectors. It includes independent electric power producers, investor-owned utilities, public power, manufacturers, commercial end users and service providers in energy and environmental markets. Founded in 1992, the coalition's diverse business membership is united around the continued revitalization of the economy and the creation of a secure and reliable energy future in America.

BCSE is pleased to have an independent small- and medium-size businesses initiative under its banner, the Clean Energy Business Network (CEBN). Together, BCSE and CEBN represent a broad range of the clean energy economy, from Fortune 200 companies to small businesses working in all 50 states and over 350 Congressional districts. On a national basis, the energy efficiency, natural gas and renewable energy sectors support over 3.2 million U.S. jobs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented economic uncertainty in the United States. However, past experience has shown that rural energy programs have provided the means for agriculture-based entrepreneurs to launch initiatives to generate jobs and economic development – from wind, geothermal, hydro and solar power, to biogas and advanced biofuels, to biopower, bio-based products, renewable chemicals, and energy efficiency. For America's farmers, ranchers and rural small businesses to continue to be leaders in the development and advancement of the clean energy economy, it is critical to adequately fund and expand Department of Agriculture clean energy programs.

As Congress moves forward with appropriations legislation for Fiscal Year 2021, we urge you to do the following:

- 1) Continue robust funding for rural clean energy programs; and
- 2) Provide clear direction to the Department of Agriculture in legislative language or report language.

Energy Programs like the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) should be modified to include additional clean energy technologies, such as energy storage and stationary fuel cells, while funding for the REAP, as well as funding for the Rural Energy Savings Program (RESP), should be significantly expanded to assist rural areas with upgrades and resilience.

The growth and impact of clean energy technologies over the past decade demonstrate the value of the federal investment that has been made in clean energy programs across the U.S., including in rural areas. The [2020 Sustainable Energy in America Factbook](#) released by the Business Council for Sustainable Energy and BloombergNEF shows that energy efficiency, natural gas and renewable energy drove a decade of U.S. energy transformation which was an era of economic growth, falling greenhouse gas emissions, and falling energy costs for consumers. A complementary report from CEBN entitled [Faces Behind the Facts](#), highlights some of the small to medium-sized clean energy entrepreneurs who are helping to drive this transformation. Given the economic fall-out of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is now more important than ever to continue to drive this economic growth.

BCSE members and BCSE staff continue to work on a remote, work-from-home basis during the COVID-19 crisis, but we are available to meet with your staff via teleconference to discuss the Council's views. Please contact Ruth McCormick at [rmccormick@bcse.org](mailto:rmccormick@bcse.org) if you would like to arrange a conference call.

Sincerely,



Lisa Jacobson, President